

Teaching Resource: Shooting from the Shadows

By Michael “Wings” Williams

Publisher: John Douglas Publishing

Overview

Shooting from the Shadows offers a firsthand account of Michael “Wings” Williams’s service in the New Zealand Special Air Service (NZSAS) during the Borneo and Vietnam conflicts between 1956 and 1971. The book provides insights into the experiences of an elite soldier and the evolution of New Zealand’s military engagements during the Cold War era. Williams’s narrative emphasises the values of humility, commitment, and excellence that define the NZSAS ethos.

Curriculum Links

Social Sciences:

New Zealand history, military involvement, and international relations.

English:

Analysis of autobiographical texts and narrative techniques.

Health and Physical Education:

Mental health and resilience in high-stress professions.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

Understand the role and operations of the NZSAS during the Borneo and Vietnam conflicts.

Analyse personal narratives to comprehend the human aspects of warfare.

Explore the development of New Zealand’s military identity and its influence on contemporary forces.

Reflect on the ethical and psychological dimensions of military service.

Lesson Plan

Exploring the NZSAS through Shooting from the Shadows

Lesson 1: Introduction to the NZSAS and Michael “Wings” Williams

Objective:

Familiarise students with the NZSAS’s history and Williams’s background.

Activities:

Discussion: What is the NZSAS? Explore its formation, purpose, and significance in New Zealand’s military history.

Reading Assignment: Chapters detailing Williams’s early life and enlistment.

Research Task: Investigate the geopolitical context of the Borneo and Vietnam conflicts.

(National Army Museum / Aotearoa Books)

Homework:

Write a brief biography of Michael “Wings” Williams, highlighting his motivations for joining the NZSAS.

Lesson 2: Life in the NZSAS during the Borneo and Vietnam Conflicts

Objective:

Examine the daily experiences and challenges faced by NZSAS soldiers.

Activities:

Group Reading: Select passages describing missions in Borneo and Vietnam.

Discussion: Analyse the physical and psychological demands of special operations.

Multimedia: View documentary clips or interviews with NZSAS veterans.

(National Army Museum)

Homework:

Reflective journal entry on the personal sacrifices of NZSAS soldiers.

Lesson 3: Values and Ethics in the NZSAS

Objective:

Understand the core values upheld by the NZSAS and their manifestation in Williams’s narrative.

Activities:

Discussion: Identify and discuss themes of humility, commitment, and excellence in the text.

Case Study: Examine a specific mission and evaluate the ethical decisions involved.

Guest Speaker: Invite a military ethicist or veteran to discuss moral dilemmas in combat.

(John Douglas Publishing)

Homework:

Essay on how NZSAS values influence decision-making in high-pressure situations.

Lesson 4: Legacy of the NZSAS and Contemporary Relevance

Objective:

Explore the impact of the NZSAS's history on modern New Zealand military practices.

Activities:

Research Project: Investigate the training and missions of contemporary NZSAS units.

Comparison: Analyse similarities and differences between Williams's experiences and those of current soldiers, such as Willie Apiata VC.

Debate: Discuss the relevance of NZSAS values in today's society.

(National Army Museum)

Homework:

Prepare a presentation on the evolution of the NZSAS from Williams's era to the present day.

Additional Resources

Shooting from the Shadows by Michael "Wings" Williams – John Douglas Publishing.

Documentaries on the NZSAS and New Zealand's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Interviews and biographies of contemporary NZSAS members.

John Douglas Publishing; National Army Museum.

Assesement

Reflective Journal: Ongoing entries analysing personal reactions to the readings and discussions.

Essay: Critical analysis of the ethical challenges faced by NZSAS soldiers.

Presentation: Group project on the legacy and contemporary role of the NZSAS.

This teaching resource aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the NZSAS's history, values, and the personal experiences of its members, fostering critical thinking and ethical reflection.

This is a strong and well-structured teaching resource for Shooting from the Shadows by Michael "Wings" Williams. It clearly integrates historical, ethical, and literary analysis while grounding learning in both the personal and national context. Here are a few suggestions to enhance it further: disciplinary inquiry, encourages empathy, and asks critical questions about national service and personal sacrifice.